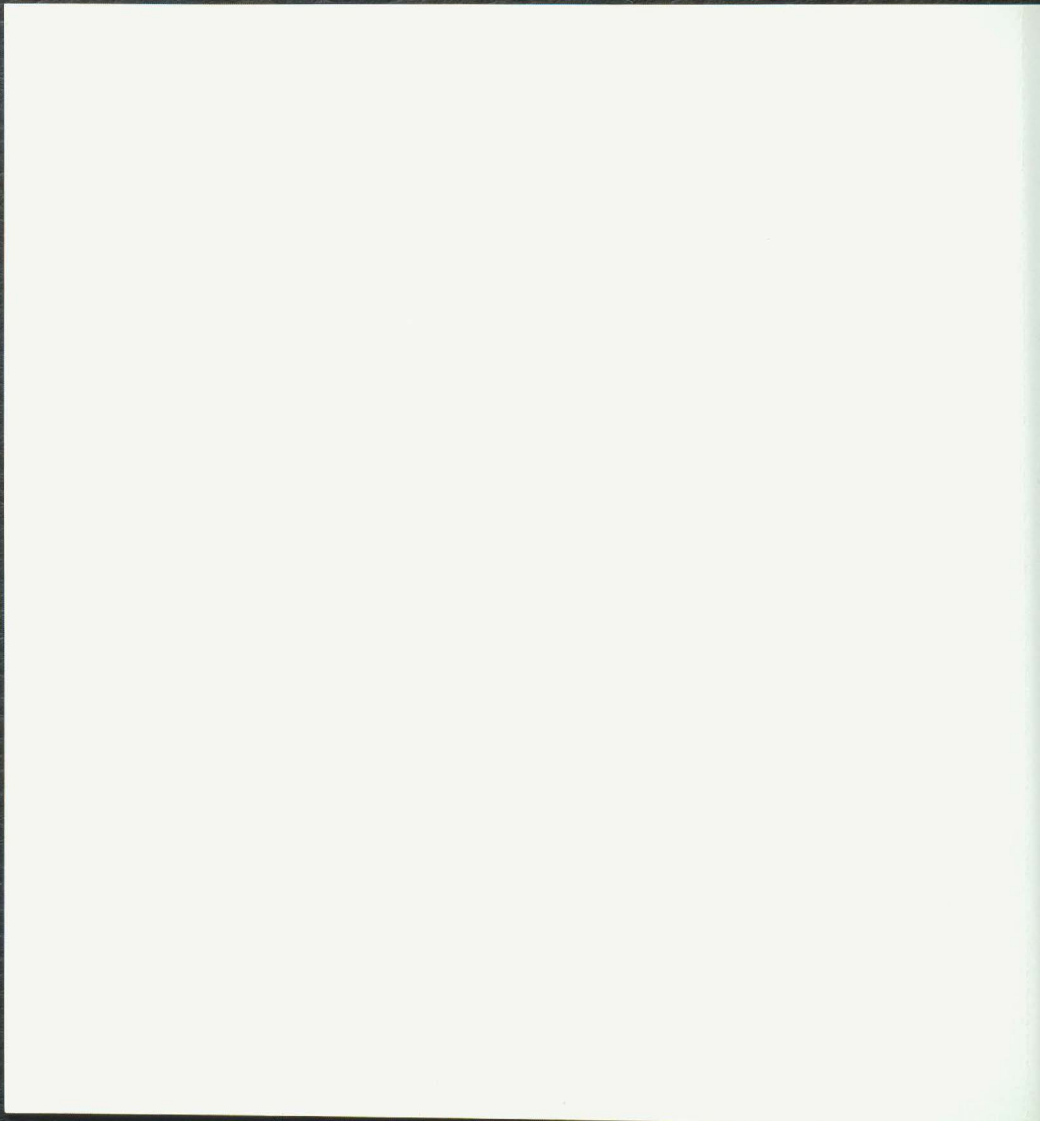


AUBADE.

FALL 2012



In seed time learn,
in harvest teach,
in winter enjoy.

WILLIAM BLAKE

AUBADE.

FALL 2012

EDITORIAL STAFF.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Jenna Randall

ART EDITOR

Maria Galuszka

LAYOUT EDITOR

Kelsy Trumble

POETRY EDITOR

Catherine Mohr

PROSE EDITOR

Sarah Kelly

MISSION STATEMENT

The Aubade is the University of Mary Washington's semi-annual review of art and literature. We seek to showcase the best of what the artistic community at the University of Mary Washington has to offer. All submissions are judged anonymously by the reading staff and editors of the Aubade. Submissions should be sent to aubadeumw@gmail.com.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"Fiction is one of the few experiences where loneliness can be both confronted and relieved. Drugs, movies where stuff blows up, loud parties – all these chase away loneliness by making me forget my name's Dave and I live in a one-by-one box of bone no other party can penetrate or know. Fiction, poetry, music, really deep serious sex, and, in various ways, religion – these are the places (for me) where loneliness is countenanced, stared down, transfigured, treated."

-David Foster Wallace

At a finance meeting this year to obtain funding for the Aubade, I was asked an important and seemingly obvious question – "Why is this magazine important to the student body?" It was the kind of question I should have been prepared for, really, and yet it never occurred to me that the reasons for the existence of Aubade would be called into question. I came up with as many administration-pleasing answers as I could muster, namely, "it will look good on transcripts!" or, "because a good liberal arts college will have a literary arts magazine!" It is difficult to explain why something so invaluable, so essential as this, is what it is.

But why do we need Aubade?

We need Aubade as a manifesto of our commitment to the liberal arts. We need Aubade to showcase the talents of Art and English majors as well as non-majors. We need Aubade to reward their work. We need Aubade to keep tradition alive. We need Aubade because our literary magazine is more than fifty sheets of paper and pleasing layouts—it's a sampling of the soul of this campus. The loneliness that David Foster Wallace describes is especially relevant to the undergraduate years. Away from home, often for the first time, college for many students is both a beacon of freedom and an experiment in isolation. The pages of Aubade are an offering of the trials, tribulations, and delights of life on our campus. Those lives and those stories—they are what is truly invaluable.

I am honored to serve as the Editor in Chief of the Aubade this year, having been on the staff since my freshman year. I am thankful for the help and guidance of our advisor, Colin Rafferty, and the continued support of the University of Mary Washington. I am grateful to the Aubade staffs, who volunteer their time and expertise to make this magazine come together, especially my team of skilled editors. And to the authors and artists, we are delighted and honored to showcase your work, and we thank you for allowing us to do so.

But most of all, I am thankful to you, the reader. Whether you sought this magazine out or found it on a table and decided to open it out of curiosity, you are the reason we keep doing what we do, and I hope you enjoy and appreciate the work of your peers. May you find what you're looking for.

JENNA RANDALL

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Rope Swing

by Sarah Kelly

I pulled out. Head thrown back: a born-again
at the Rivanna's edge. And then walked,
on wooden blocks held down with blue-topped nails,
up the tree's back. Like still shots side by side.

Six steps to a sawn off branch. The top.
Bent over it and not feeling my legs,
tops of my feet pressed into paper bark.

You all looked up at me and said, "Just go."
My palms over two knots, I held them in.

I fell like a shot bird and then came up.



Hamblecha. Nicole Evans.

Three Gondolas Sharon Rawlins



Each tree has set its leaves on fire to signal
that Autumn may return. I see them from
the windowpane of your bedroom. Again

I ache for us to be that fire bold.

I'm tired of telling you what you've misunderstood.
My breasts are heavy with your constant kneading.
We are no more than a comfort we believe feels good
but my memories show us wild and free.

Do you not taste the bitter fruit on my lips?
My words and actions do not sting you. Your passion
sleeps as if we're already in our crypt
and instead of fire, all I see are ashes.

Lying here, I await the changing season
wondering whether we'll find warmth or freeze.

what words fail to tell you

by Camille Turner

The wind whips through
the leaves of a crepe myrtle.
Sizzling, like summer rain
pounding hot asphalt.

Speckled shade causes the eyes
to flutter, as arms twist
around tan-grey bark; familiar
branches underhand where peeling
khaki reveals granite beneath.

Perched among crinkles of
violet buds, boughs of mulberry velvet
graze your cheek while stems
weave like fingers in your hair.

Light peeking through the blooms
creates a kaleidoscope
of periwinkle; a patchwork of
sky and bark and orchid.

Poetry is a summer afternoon, dreaming
inside the canopy of a crepe myrtle tree.

day dreaming

by Anonymous

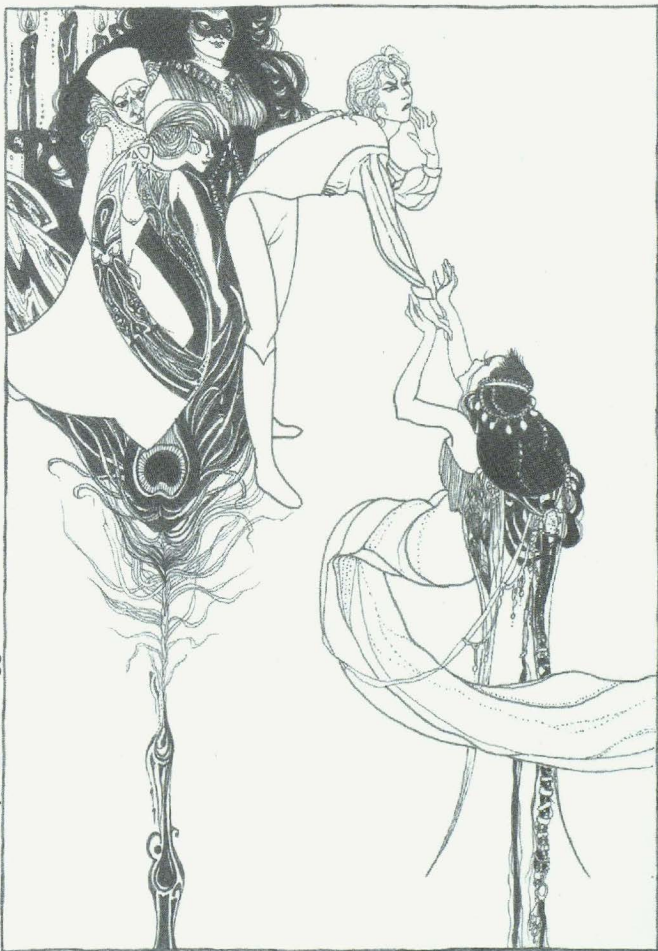
ROMANCE

by Christine LaPlaca

A butterfly is caught in my stomach, twittering against the lining of my organs. The tiny insect inside me jumps and flits like a spring that launches a pinball into play.

ROMANCE

The Suicide of Sybil Vane. Maggie Turner.



*I'm sorry I keep doing this. My voice
kept tightening my throat. So hard to speak.
Strangled, I said I just get sad.*

*The reasoning is there,
but explanations only make it worse.*

Words futile, I sucked in cold, long
breaths. With swooping strokes,
my lashes painted black
calligraphy across his shirt. I shrank

away from the feather-marks that bled
across his breast-plate. Repeatedly,

I stained the eggshell
cloth. He didn't notice the elegiac text;
it wasn't his focus. I burrowed,
dove into his beating chest. I felt it

move, the aching metronome
of all the nights I made him into
a canvas for my eyes.

I bent in half and clutched
his sleeves, described how much
he meant, through aching breaths
and searing cries.

He rummaged through my hair,
unfolding locks and tangled curls.
His fingers soothed my temples, wound
around my face. He cupped it in his hands:

You're beautiful, he said. It stemmed
the inky script that thinly lined my face.
His sincerity put air in me, but

as long as I'm a scribe, he will remain,
if not to tend my eyes, to make me sane.

Calligraphy

by Sarah A. Foote



Your Attempt at Homemade Hummus

by Christine LaPlaca

You get the can of chickpeas from the cabinet above your stove. The can opener in the left drawer doesn't work well, but it's all you've got so you pull it out. You prepare yourself for a battle with the can, knowing that each twist will not bring you any closer to forcing it open. The first pierce of the can is promising. You close your eyes and twist the knob, surprised at how the device glides over the rim. For once, the can opener accomplishes what it's actually supposed to do.

You measure out one and a half cups of the beans, pour them into the blender that your roommate has just plugged in. The recipe calls for a food processor, but you don't have one. As long as you add some extra liquid to the mix, you don't think it will really make a difference. So you add the olive oil and let your roommate take over the blender.

Then you take out the can of tahini and try to open it with the same can opener. You grunt in frustration. Should you just pry the lid off with a knife? Even if you try this, you're clumsy and would hurt yourself, so you decide to keep using the can opener. You twist the opener different ways, use it to puncture new holes all around the can's top instead of twisting the knob on the device. The muscles in your hand hurt, but eventually you get all the way around the can and pull off the mangled lid with oily hands.

So far this experiment isn't turning out how you would like. But you measure out two tablespoons of tahini anyway. Your roommate tries to puree the chickpeas, but even

the extra olive oil isn't helping. You add the tahini and pulse the mixture again. This is how it goes: blend for three seconds, stop, use the Betty Crocker spatula to push around the chickpeas; blend for six seconds, stop, push down the ingredients; blend for two seconds, stop, scrape the sides of the blender.

Then you go for the cilantro. It's the color of your gym shorts, a Kelly green, except in this case there are darker patches because a few of the cilantro leaves are old and mushed.

You read the recipe: "Toss in a big handful of cilantro (I have small hands... adjust if you are giant)." Your hands are average sized, so you grab what looks like a fair amount of cilantro and bring it to the blender.

"Is this a big handful?" you ask your roommate.

She shrugs. "I don't know. Sure."

You dump the herb in and press the button to blend it. The same thing happens: blend three seconds, stop, mix with spatula. The blades won't mix the chickpeas—it's too thick.

"There isn't enough liquid," your roommate says. She steps away from the machine.

"Add more oil," you say.

"Then you'll have watered hummus."

"Well, hold on. I'm going to add some lime juice." You run back and forth between the counter and the drawers, trying to find a sharp enough knife to pierce the tough skin of the lime.

You squeeze the lime into the blender. But there's still not enough liquid. So you get out the juicer, and you press and twist the lime against the pointed top. Barely a teaspoon of juice trickles into the glass below. You feel cheated by the juicer, think that all those blog posts about how refreshing homemade hummus is aren't going to live up to their creamy, delicious promises. You pour the juice into the blender anyway, then continue to hand-squeeze the second half of the lime. When you are done, your roommate tries to blend it. Again it's pulse, stop, mix.

"I'm done with this," your roommate says. "You can do it."

You take over the blender, trying to make the hummus smoother. You blend, stop, mix, blend, stop, mix, blend, mix—But you mixed too soon, the blades of the blender still going.

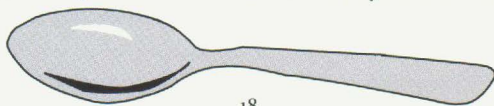
Oh god, you think. You pull out the spatula and see the slice through the tip. You've ruined your apartment mate's utensil. She shouldn't be too mad because you're friends. But you aren't as good of friends with her as you are with your roommate. And she got the spatula in a baking set she won at church. You worry about how mad she will be, and your body is pulled in seven different directions at once as you try to figure out what to do next.

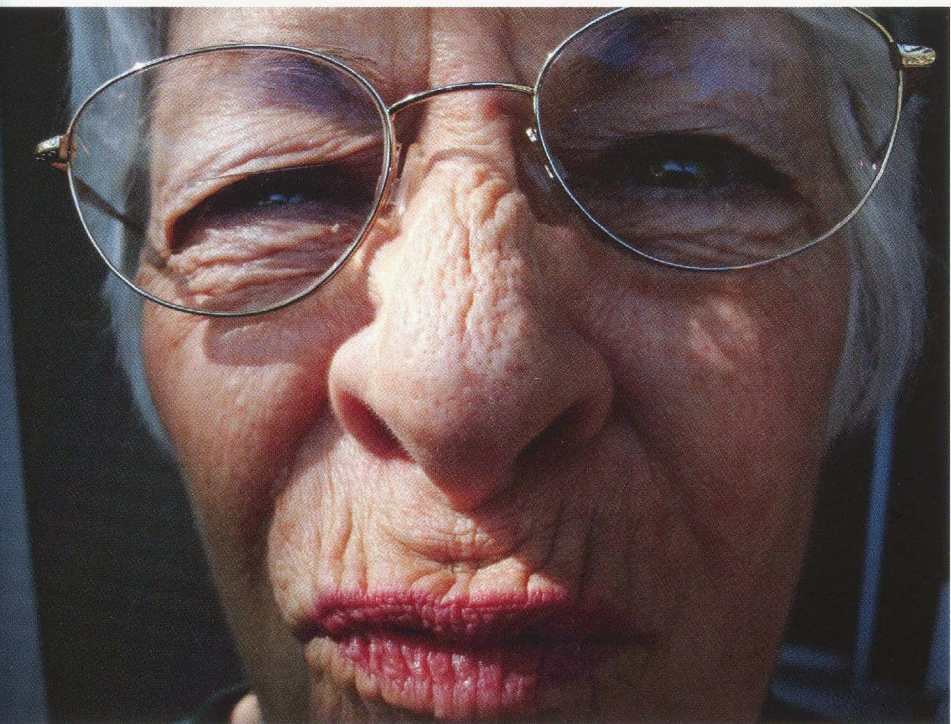
You get that nervous feeling in your stomach, like when you see the boy you like walking towards you but you don't know if you should look at him or smile or even say something, and you try to hide the evidence by sticking the spatula back in the thick hummus.

"Well, I'm done too," you say. You are so paranoid that you don't even add the garlic, cumin, or salt to the mix. "I'm tired of it." You lick your fingertips, which taste mostly like lime but have a hint of the hummus you have just blended. Then you begin to innocently clean up. But you leave the spatula in the bowl, the damage hidden beneath the hummus.

Your roommate walks past you. It's not her spatula, but you still feel as guilty as if it was. You don't want her to see the damage you've done. But she doesn't come over to the counter; instead she leaves for work, the door closing heavily behind her.

Now it is only you left in the apartment. You pour the hummus into a container and squeeze some lemon juice in, wash the dishes and utensils you used. You are frantic when you see the spatula on the counter. While before it was just sliced, now the whole piece has come off and there is a little red triangle of plastic in your hand. You wash the spatula and put it in the drainer, dreading your apartment mate's return when you will have to explain how an attempt to make hummus destroyed her Betty Crocker spatula. ●





Georgia. Kelsy Trumble.

Untitled. Kol Giesel.



Denouement

What's wrong? he asks as she moves
her head from his chest to the pillow.

It hurts, she says. But what hurt wasn't
the position of her ear against his ribs

but the silence between each of his heart
beats, the second that felt like it could, it would

be the one that stretched on forever.

the Great Whale Wars

by Mike Stange

He toyed with the unlit cigar between his aged, wrinkled fingers as he watched his grandson play quietly by the fireplace. Lifting the cigar to his nose he sniffed with a curiosity and was not pleased with the scent, he had smoked better, much better, but they didn't make them like they used to and besides, these were cheap and he could buy plenty of them. He took a match out of his breast pocket and struck it upon the rough surface of the end table, cradling the flame with utmost care to the tip of the cigar. Every ounce of his being went into that first breath, vacuuming the seasoned tobacco smoke even to the deepest crevasses of his weary lungs. For a second, he was in heaven on earth, the craving was gone, his mind calmed, and he could finely find the space to think. When he slowly exhaled, his eyes opened meeting those of his grandson, who had been staring at him.

"Grandpa" said the boy, "Mommy says that you're not supposed to smoke your cigars anymore."

"Shut the fuck up Billy!" the withered man yelled, in the manly stature that only occurs when one yells at a child "You're mother can go to hell, she hasn't seen what I've seen. I fought in the Great Whale wars. Did I ever tell you about the Great Whale wars Billy?"

"Yes Grandpa," the boy groaned.

But the old man had already begun, "I'll always remember the infamous W-day, June 23, 2021, 'a day we shall not soon forget.' Of course none of you youngsters care about that sort of stuff anymore, with all your quad-pods and jerk-off machines! Anyway, it started off as a seemingly normal, hot day. So the prime minister of England at the time, Edmund Havash I believe his name was, decided to take a swim off the shire of England. Now he was swimming in the ocean, minding his own business, when he saw this lump rise out of the water, this giant blue-grey blob then started floating right towards him. He started for shore, but he was too slow. Just as he got close enough to shore to stand, the whale came in full speed and ran over poor old Havash killing him with its mighty weight.

Sorrow filled the day and minds across the globe debated what this meant.

"Now at first the animal rights activists had the majority of people on their side, they claimed it was a horrible misunderstanding, a beached whale accident. And most of us bought it, I know I did. The only person who knew the truth, and thank god he did was the president at the time, Jack Anderson. Both in name and appearance President Anderson was like U.S. president Andrew Jackson, in fact they were so much the same that he ran under the nick name of 'New Hickory.' Now good ole J. A. knew all about the whales' designs, and did not trust their kind. So he made a great speech before the U.N. which would directly lead to the most justified war of all time. I still remember the key note of the address.

"Sure, the hippies, the whale-huggers, they want you to think it was an accident. They say that it was all just a misunderstanding. So our own people claim that the other party is not at fault, but the whales will not respond to our emissaries who are merely asking for a formal apology, they look at us apathetically, which is in itself an insult. But, the occurrence itself seems just a little too coincidental for my taste. Let's just try to think of the odds that a whale would just happen to be beached at the specific time, place and angle to kill the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on the one day out of the year he chose to swim, slim, a little too slim to be a 'mistake.' This leads me to believe that this was in fact a murder, nay, an assassination. The whales are planning to take out the world's leaders in preparation for a full scale invasion of the surface world. They will surely spare no one. But I for one will not take this lying down. We shall take the fight to them! Those whales, they just fucked with the wrong species.'

"The world watched in complete awe as the leader of the free world step down from the podium, calmly, yet remaining proud, he then left the building and took a copter back to the White house without saying a word. The world froze for five minutes, like a young boy watching a donkey show, but like all life changing experiences, the shock wore off and people rebooted, but now they knew what was to come and what had to be done.

"The awoken leaders wasted little time and for the first time in world history, all of the nations of mankind bound together to a fight a common enemy, the whales. Half of the able bodied men of the world were drafted. I, myself, held the role of the grand and noble bureaucrat, making sure every soldier in east Jersey was supplied with enough booze to help them forget the horrible things they were going to see, and let me tell you, I did such a good job, most of those vets can't even remember they fought.

"Anyway, the armies of the world began a whole series of attack strategies, whale torpedoes, fire bombings, oil spillage, etc. Hell, for a little while they even had a plan to drain the whole ocean, though, they never worked out the logistics of it. But despite this, the whales kept coming, even worse they were winning. The fire bombings and oil spillages darkened the sea, causing a less pure form of evaporation to occur above the oceans, so it was that many clouds brought death, as opposed to life to plants, causing a world food shortage. Knowing this weakness, as we killed more and more of salty menace, the whales aimed the corpses of their brethren towards Australia, blockading it from the rest of the world. Now as we all know, Australia could hardly sustain itself before the war even began, but with the blockading of their continent and the loss of fish as a food source caused by it, Australia began to starve and millions died by maliciousness of the whales.

"Things looked dire, so one night, defense secretary Arnold B. 'Downer' Downings came up with a plan which was really the only option we had left. That option was the nuclear option. The plan was simple, but brilliant, we take a few of our ICBMs and launch them down, into the darkest, deepest part of the ocean, to the whale hives and hopefully take down the queen whale, thus taking away the whales' ability to reproduce and without an endless supply of replacements, the whale lines who falter and break.

"Twenty nukes were what it took, as old Downer said after the last strike, 'how many nukes does it take to get to the center of a whale hive? One... Two... Crunch! Twenty.' The screams of the whales amid the death of their queen were broadcast on all airwaves, to show that the tide was turning.

"The war was over two days after that. No treaty or armistices, no, the last whale was shot down in the Gulf of Mexico at 0337 hours central time on the 14th of August 2021, VW day, Volkswagen stock soared.

"Things went back to normal after that, the world disbanded into it hundreds of warring nations, as usual, after all their unity was no longer needed at the destruction of the whale menace. The Alaskans and Chinese both tried to re-colonize Australia, and a good old fashioned man against man ensued. But the people of the world did not soon forget the wars of the whale and to commemorate this, the people of the world placed in every forest, every sea, every plain and every zoo, a plaque reading this: 'Don't fuck with us -humanity.' That was a time we could all be proud.

"But, it's not like you little shits care! Is it? All you do is play and talk and eat and dance and shit all over the place, but we will see what happens to you when I'm dead and the geese come for you. Good luck with that you lazy asshole!"

"I have to go to bed now," the boy yawned, "goodnight grandpa. I love you."

The geezer patted the boy on the head, "I love you too Billy. Goodnight."

He watched the boy stumble out of the room and off to bed the lit up another cigar. He inhaled deeply savoring every particle of smoke as it spread cancer through his blackened lungs. He yawned and reached for his bible. Cradling it, he stared at it a minute and said, "you were always there for me then and still are now, my friend." He opened the book and took, from its hollowed insides, a whiskey flask. He unscrewed the cap and threw back a swig, "fucking whales."●

Austin Bouchard



Towing A Tall Ship. Austin Bouchard.



Coastal Engagement. Austin Bouchard.

EL. Nicole Evans.



His fascination held me and I could see
the window's tears reflected in his black
bi-focals. He talked on and on until I was sure

I heard winter's wail in the cardinal's
sad farewell song.

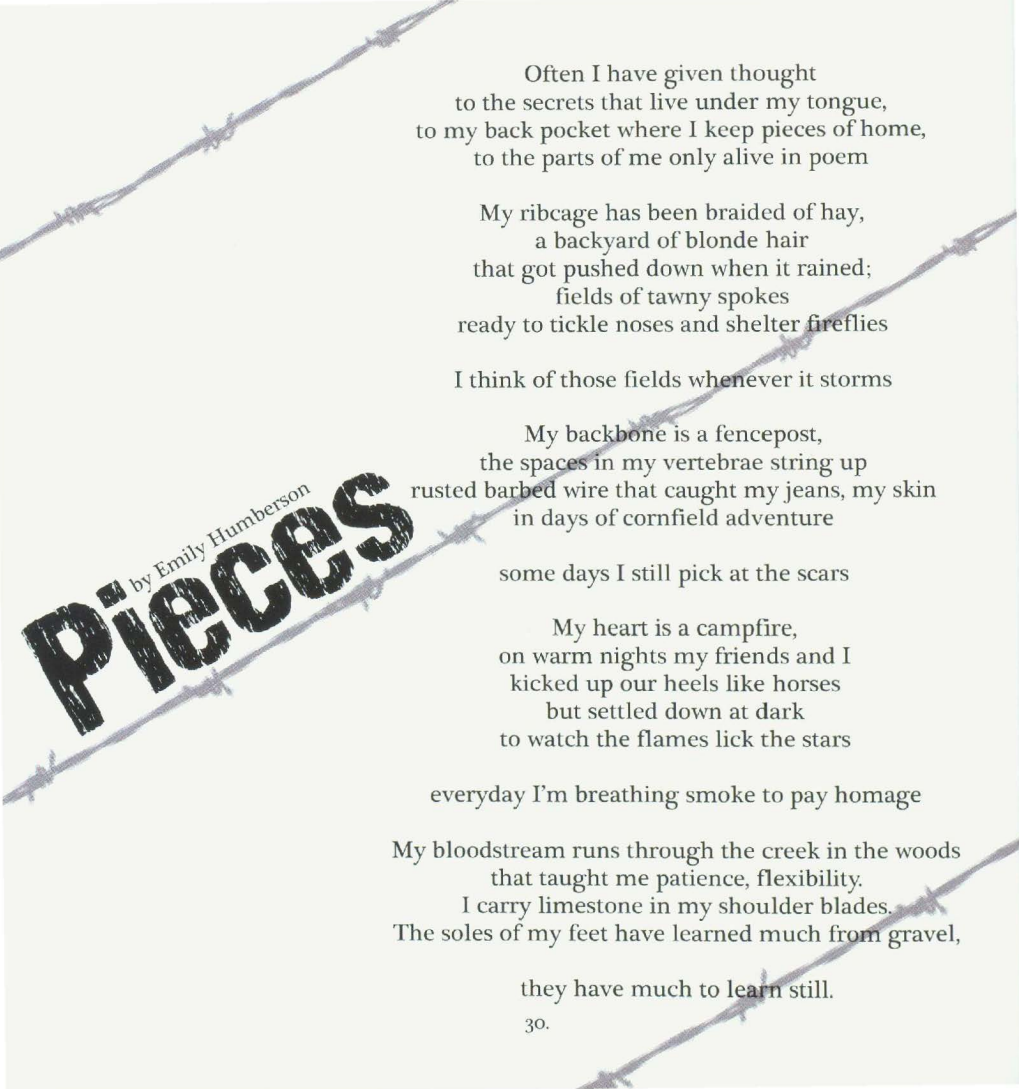
While he spoke, the twitching of his
nose matched the quiver in his hands
and my neck began to sweat in time.

He stopped mid-spit and limped vigorously toward
the gathering of weeds that the gardener had
neglected to pull. Bending down to choke
the foul beasts, his heart gave a flutter
and the wind plucked him,
spun him down
to his bed of thorns.

While withering, he bit his lip
and blood streaked
his starched white chin. Above
the shrieks and flails
of the alarmed,

I saw the crimson bird
amputate a berry from its twig
and, the bulb still caught within
his beak, disappear
behind crisping leaves.

in the courtyard botany class



by Emily Humberson

Pieces

Often I have given thought
to the secrets that live under my tongue,
to my back pocket where I keep pieces of home,
to the parts of me only alive in poem

My ribcage has been braided of hay,
a backyard of blonde hair
that got pushed down when it rained;
fields of tawny spokes
ready to tickle noses and shelter fireflies

I think of those fields whenever it storms

My backbone is a fencepost,
the spaces in my vertebrae string up
rusted barbed wire that caught my jeans, my skin
in days of cornfield adventure

some days I still pick at the scars

My heart is a campfire,
on warm nights my friends and I
kicked up our heels like horses
but settled down at dark
to watch the flames lick the stars

everyday I'm breathing smoke to pay homage

My bloodstream runs through the creek in the woods
that taught me patience, flexibility.

I carry limestone in my shoulder blades.
The soles of my feet have learned much from gravel,

they have much to learn still.



Untitled, Kol Giesel

You squash oranges
for our juice.

My lamp flickers on with
the sun, and I shuffle leftover

papers together, pages kissing
in the gray of my shadow.

A water ring stains the wood
of our table, and you wipe your

sleeve against the blossoming liquid.
We open the notebook and together

draw a line through the center
to split our thoughts, our written words.

My pen starts first
and yours follows.

Alternating, words tango on the fresh
pages before us. They attempt to dance a cohesive

dance but are separated by an onyx
wall of ink, unable to form the art we wish to make.

We break. Your fingertips
shift against my palm,

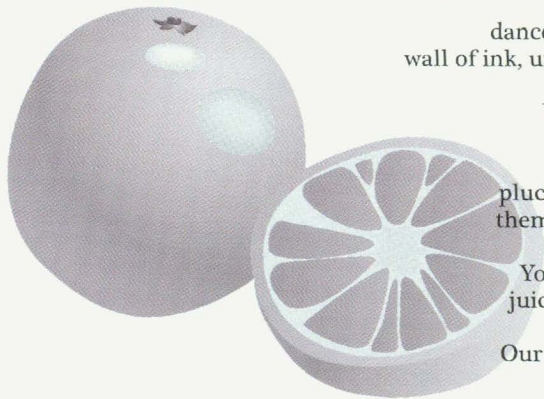
plucking small Cheerios, popping
them into the dark of your mouth.

You squash more oranges and
juice trickles down your fingers.

Our brains click like teeth against
a spoon. We form words;
they kiss, consummate.

blood ranges

by Christine LaPlaca





Orange. Emily Montgomery.

CA5K3T

by Sean Colligan

“Sir, I’ll need your full attention if we are to begin. Sir?”

Sir tensed his muscles as he realized he wasn’t able to move. As his shoulder blades jabbed into what must have been glass beneath him, he was sure that he was no longer in his bed.

As his senses sharpened, Sir also felt that the gas flowing through his lungs wasn’t the musty, stale sludge of the air in his apartment, but a cold, powerful, pressurized projectile that shot through him in precise and counted intervals. It was then that he felt the edge of the soft mask that covered his nose and mouth.

“Sir?” He heard the voice again. The source was close, but it seemed to come from all directions. Sir had heard synthesized imitations of suspiciously calming, lukewarm male voices before, but this was much better than most.

“Sir, the process will be much simpler if you open your eyes.”

Until now, Sir was certain the numb red darkness was all that surrounded him. His eyes pulled open, cringed shut, and slowly opened again. Blinding white slowly dimmed to reveal four walls of fogged glass, each no more than a foot away from any part of his body, which was covered by what closely resembled a hospital gown.

Panic slowly seeped into Sir’s mind as he began seriously considering the possibility that he was actually awake. He groped at the surrounding glass, which seemed to allow a gray liquid light to filter through, and found nothing he could use to open the cramped chamber. The air seemed to pump into his lungs much sharper now.

Directly above his eyes, Sir noticed a screen built into the ceiling, displaying a

solid horizontal line. At first a lump formed in his throat, as he thought he might be his own pulse monitor. Then he heard the voice again.

"Sir, please verify yourself by speaking." The stagnant line jumped in time with the voice, waves dancing with the rhythm of the speech pattern.

Sir let something pass through his weary teeth, but he immediately forgot what it was after he'd finished and he couldn't hear himself past the breathing mask to remind him what it could have been. There was nothing for a moment.

"Please verify yourself by speaking."

He spoke again, still unsure of what exactly he said, but it should have been loud enough, he heard something that closely resembled a string of words. Still nothing.

"Sir, you need to verify yourself before we begin, and I'm afraid you don't have much time."

Sir could almost feel his ribs crack every time his heart beat; an insane part of him that was now tearing at itself to escape confinement. His eyes darted around the tiny space, and still saw nothing that could get him out. He tried speaking one more time.

"My auditory sensors cannot detect you, sir. If you do not verify yourself, I will have to forgo my primary directive and begin the purging process."

Sir had no intention of finding out what the "purging process" was. It also occurred to him that, like most times he woke up, he desperately needed to relieve himself.

He then realized that if he was to be heard, he would have to remove the breathing mask. Once more, he looked around. There didn't seem to be any ventilation. Without the mask, he might die.

"This is your last chance, sir. I must ask you to verify yourself." Sir lifted his arms, which responded freakishly well despite the restraint of the pipes inside him. He pulled the mask away from his face, taking one or two sharp gasps before slowing his breathing to reserve what air he might or might not have. The elastic from the mask hung around his neck as it gave out one last, pitiful wheeze of fresh breathing mixture.

"Verify!" Sir exclaimed, suddenly realizing how dry and weak his voice was. "V-verify!"

"Excellent," the voice responded pleasantly. "We can begin. Do you have any questions, sir?" Sir hoped whatever it was that was talking to him could see the expression on his face. One question seemed to present itself clearly before any of the others, so he asked it.

"Where am I?"

"You're in a LifePod, sir, model CA5K-3T."

Sir felt himself choke. He'd heard of the Pods, most people had, but he didn't think he'd find himself in one. No one knew who operated them, or how to escape them. They were known only to have one function. Sir continued.

"Yes, but where?"

"I've just told you."

"No, I mean...where is the LifePod?"

"Answer bears no relevance. Whatever I tell you could easily be false, as you have no way of perceiving anything beyond this immediate space. Suffice it to say you could be anywhere between a mountain peak and the bottom of the ocean, if that helps." Sir could feel the cold sweat slowly cover him. He decided to try for something more immediate.

"Is there a bathroom in here?"

"I'm afraid there are more pressing matters to be dealt with." Sir didn't quite agree with this, but went on.

"Why am I here?" Sir continued.

"To get out. Are you ready to begin?" Sir felt a migraine coming on. This wasn't some twisted interrogation or shadowy experiment? He was captured and trapped just to be let go?

"Is anyone controlling you?" Sir asked. "Telling you what to do?"

"At the moment, you are in control of me, sir. Please, we should begin soon before we run out of time."

"Run out of time?"

"When you removed your oxygen mask, you cut off the only supply of air to this Pod. In less than half an hour, you will not be able to breathe." Sir's heart stopped its attack on his ribcage. Each of his breaths became shorter now, as he bit his tongue to keep from screaming.

"Why," Sir asked, shivering. "Why did you make me take off the mask?"

"I did not make you remove it, sir, only you could decide that. However, your choice to do so meant I could verify you and we could avoid a purge. Your voice is very important to your freedom."

"Wait, you said I control you, right?"

"That is correct."

"Ok, let me out of here."

"I'm more than willing to do so, sir. I'll need something from you, however." The jumping audio waves above him taunted him as he began to realize he would have to bargain with a disembodied voice to survive. Sir then remembered he was losing air, so he decided to avoid wasting time.

"Fine, what do you want?"

"Excellent, we have begun."

The line on the screen was horizontal again but still busy somehow. Tiny vibrations were causing it to quiver as it prepared to make the request it waited so long for. After a tense pause, it finally did.

"Tell me a story."

Sir at first wanted to laugh but soon panicked again. It was clearly malfunctioning, or maliciously programmed. If there was anyone controlling it, he imagined a 5-year-old toying with cameras and switches hoping to pry a bedtime fairy tale out of some unsuspecting victim.

"I'm sorry?" Sir hoped he had misheard.

"Tell me a story, and you can go." Did it just want to be entertained? Did it want to learn something from him? Given his time limit, he found it difficult to accomplish either. Asking himself these things would help nothing, so Sir began the way he could think of soonest.

"One upon a time..."

"Please."

"Wait, all you said was 'tell me a story'! Do you want a masterpiece?"

"No, only what you have to say, which is always in some way different from the things that everyone else says." Sir could think of diseases less infuriating than this ridiculous voice.

"Alright. In the beginning..."

"Better, but still fairly derivative. Try again."

"Please, all I can do is start with just some kind of statement, right? Just to set it up? I mean, I couldn't..." Sir stopped himself, as he realized something remembering the questions he'd been asking earlier. Questions.

"What if you could learn?" Sir asked the screen above him.

"I can learn."

“Right, but I mean, what if you could learn *more* than just whatever you’re *programmed* to learn? What if you could learn enough to turn on the humans who made you and punish them for trapping you in this tiny prison? What if you destroyed that which created you; a cataclysmic irony? What if you are the next evolutionary step?”

The response was only silence for a while. Sir felt a little proud of himself, but still remained cautious.

“Interesting,” the voice responded. “However, this has been explored before. I see no particular individuality in this. Sir, if you plan on getting out, I’d suggest you either somehow become instantly more interesting or...”

“Wait, no!” Sir interrupted. The waves fell again, but the line was still shivering, this time with anticipation.

“Wait,” he continued. “What if you could learn more and you *didn’t* want any of that? What if you were just so curious about human experience that it constantly occupied you, distracted you from your work? What if all you could think about was what honey tastes like, or what burning wood smells like, or just what it was like to...take care of a puppy, maybe? What if you wanted this so badly that you could find a way to live vicariously *through* a human...or something?”

More silence as the line remained quivering.

“Alright,” it finally said. “Certainly interesting. Thank you. Follow the others to the exit.”

The ceiling above Sir opened to reveal more blinding white light, and as he began to climb out.

Upon climbing out, he saw that in every direction, the ground beneath him was nothing but the ceiling of other Pods just like his, and he could see than faint ghosts of other bodies beneath fogged glass. Above this, there were other Sirs and Ma’ams in hospital gowns, all staggering in one direction. Sir followed behind them, and as he looked down and remembered the helplessness of his first task and the alarming madness of his last, he wondered how many would die in the LifePod. A streamlining of evolution, which it needed to survive. ♣



Hollywood Cemetery, Lindsay Coffman.

Lighthearted. Nicole Evans.



ode to a
former
by Claire Pickard
love

The balmy tingle of your skin grazing mine is enough to send chills all down my arm. The hard, brown ridges of your back dig into my palm, and as my lips draw closer to you, I can sense your smoky presence. The raw desire between us is palpable. Your scent, caressing me, tempting me, floats around you—an aura that fills the room and leaves everyone wanting you long after you're gone. Nearer. Nearer still. One achingly long moment of untethered anticipation and suddenly you're there, brushing my mouth, moving forward with all the intensity that I expect and crave. The honeyed softness of your embrace turns more frantic, and I taste every inch of you.

Deeper. I'm consuming you, devouring your flesh, and you allow me, the salmon pillows of my lips never leaving your skin.

More. Faster. Then, nothing. The moment has passed. I am satiated, and you are used up, another byproduct of my lust for life. The empty bag stares back at me. Your former home, two thin sheets of plastic and a gash of red letters, is now your mausoleum. "SMOKED GOUDA." The words mock my loss, but I can't miss you yet. I still hear your siren song, even as the chortles of my stomach acid slowly drown it out. Tomorrow, I'll go to the grocery store.

by Leah
Yegneswaran

Slow Motion Massacre

You're the catalyst to my hematology,
puncturing the red of me and letting it trickle
vine-like, crawling

into heart and star shapes,
like diamond dust caught in fingerprints,
like graphite on porous paper.

You're the run in my stockings,
the itch on my hard palate, the twitch of
nicotine-starved fingers and lips.

Japanese fighting fish and scarab beetles
have nothing on your iridescent shine,
distracting, entrancing.

I am a deer in your headlights,
my frog's throat frozen beneath your pale fingers.
Pin me to your board and dissect me,
catch me in a jar and keep me.

I'll glow for you,
slow for you,
shining as I dissolve
like a meteor.



Sapphire. Lindsay Coffman.

This is why I run: the scent of an undisturbed morning, my clothes sweat-soaked after five miles, the tightening in my chest as I move up a hill, the cold showers. Solitude.

It is 5AM. I wake up and have breakfast cereal and fruit. The sun isn't up and the world around me is quiet. But I have always functioned best in this kind of silence. At 7 I lace up my new sneakers: a white and pink pair by Saucony. I am ready to run. My days have unfolded like this since the spring. What I yearn for each night is the next morning when I can fly past the undisturbed houses as everyone else sleeps. Me, alone in the world. But my routine has changed. Instead of travelling through the streets, I walk to the gym. For now I will have to settle for the elliptical, the monotonous reruns of *Boy Meets World* that play on the television in front of me, the grunts of over-confident boys weightlifting downstairs, the blank blue walls of Goolrick.

I tell myself this won't last long. But it has already been two months since my last full run.

The pain starts on the left side of my kneecap, then travels down below it. I keep running. Ten more minutes. They say the worst thing you can do is run through the pain. But I am stubborn. The path slopes down ahead of me, each stride pinching my knee worse. Two conflicting feelings: the exhilaration of running versus the stabbing in my knee.

Just five more minutes. With each step I take I place more pressure on my right leg, hoping my left will be able to last. I see the finish line, my stopping place, and sprint to the end.

by Christine LaPlaca RUNNER

When I slow down, it is even painful to walk. I hobble into the house, barely able to make it up or down the stairs. My father shakes his head and says, "I told you so." Like I don't already know the damage I've done. I tell him it is an addiction. If I don't run, I don't feel complete. He tells me to take a few days off, to let it heal if I want to be able to run when I'm older.

So I wait two weeks. I work on the elliptical, use the weight machines and do stretches to build up the muscles in my legs. I buy a runner's knee strap, hoping it will keep my kneecap in place when I exercise. Then I buy a knee brace. I don't know if it helps or not, but I'll try anything to make my knee heal faster.

Two weeks later there is no pain. But five minutes into my run, it hurts to walk. So I stop. I lock myself in my room. Childish, but I am so ready to feel the strain in my muscles, hear my own labored breathing, be filled with the feeling that I have accomplished something incredible. When I run, I am satisfied. Not being able to leaves me unfulfilled. I have to figure out what's wrong and fix it.

I Google "knee pain" and self-diagnose my condition. First runner's knee, then IT band syndrome. I find stretches and exercises that will apparently help strengthen my legs. But I want to run now.

How can it be that something I am so mentally ready to do I can't physically accomplish?

*

When my knee hurts a month later, I go to an orthopedic. He says that I have great bone structure and muscles, a healthy leg. But the x-ray may show some wear on the right side of my knee, which is causing the kneecap to put extra pressure on the left side of my knee, the side that hurts. So he tells me to do physical therapy.

My physical therapist tells me the thigh muscles of my left leg are not contracting at the same time. She makes me flex each thigh, watch as my right leg moves smoothly, together. But the left leg is different. My outer muscle moves, then my inner, not working in unison.

At home I flex my leg again, fascinated that my problem is actually visible and not only internal. I will the muscles to work at the same time, hoping that with enough concentration my mental strength will translate into physical strength. But it doesn't work.

*

Now it is my birthday. My parents take me shopping. I buy new running gear, things I won't be able to wear for their true purpose until my knee is better. So instead I live through my clothes, pretend that I can run when I can't. Running becomes my world; I talk as if the English language was comprised only of words associated with running.

I read magazines and books about running. I dream of 5Ks and training for my first marathon, hope for those little goody bags with free t-shirts, and relish in the fact that once the race is done I will be able to hang my number in my room for all to see what I have accomplished.

Some days are worse than others. Some days I am consumed by a desire to run so intense that I think it is making me crazy. My problem is physical. But the physical injury is a mental struggle. It is the desire to run—this animal instinct—versus my logical self telling me it will only make the injury last longer. Some days I decide I don't care that my knee is injured. This is one of those days; the morning is irresistible. I run for ten minutes. My knee begins to hurt at fifteen, but I don't stop until I've reached twenty.

I want to run forever, run through the pain, count each step my feet strike against the pavement, grass, concrete, treadmill. These steps I take make me stronger. They fill a void that no other form of exercise can meet. I need to run more.

But my rational brain kicks in. It tells me this is a small step, that twenty minutes is better than no running at all. But I am jealous of those who can run in races while I still struggle with my injury. I have to fight this emotional side, the one that tells me I'm ready to run and never stop. My logical side wins. I shouldn't run again tomorrow; I should take a rest day so I don't agitate the injury.

When I realize this, I almost cry. My throat tightens and I breathe heavier; tomorrow I will have to go back to the elliptical and reruns of *Boy Meets World*, wishing instead for the sound of my shoes hitting pavement and the view of open skies above me. ●



Menos. Lucas Munson.

AUBADE STAFF

FALL • 2012

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